

'ANTI-SANCTUARY' LEGISLATION BREWING IN OREGON

Bill not expected to receive hearing, but petition for ballot measure underway

House Bill 2921 would repeal Oregon's sanctuary state law and mandate that Oregon law enforcement agencies assist in federal immigration enforcement. The bill would also prohibit cities and counties from establishing sanctuary protections.

But Rep. Mike Nearman, a Republican from Independence, who is one of the bill's chief sponsors, says he doesn't expect HB 2921 to receive a hearing, instead Nearman is working on a petition to make the repeal a ballot measure to put before the voters in 2018.

Nearman says he doesn't like that the state's sanctuary law prohibits Oregon law officers from enforcing federal immigration laws. "I think that we just need to be able to enforce the laws just for their own sake just because we don't need illegal people running around our country," he tells *Eugene Weekly*.

Meanwhile, on March 13, the Eugene City Council voted unanimously to adopt a sanctuary-type ordinance to protect immigrants and Eugene residents. The "Protections for Individuals" ordinance prohibits city staff and operations from utilizing "city resources for purposes of enforcing federal immigration law unless related to a criminal offense," according to a city news release.

Eugene Human Rights Commission Chair Ken Neubeck says the ordinance was passed in case any changes — such as the ones Nearman proposes — are made to the state's sanctuary law. "This is an ordinance, not a resolution, resolutions are much less powerful and ordinances are permanent."

pay \$1 billion per year for "illegal aliens and their children," and cites one of its own prior studies. One resource listed in the study cites "constitutional scholars" without listing any names.

FAIR is designated a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. FAIR's founder John Tanton corresponded with a FAIR donor suggesting that she "read the work of a radical anti-Semitic professor — to 'give you a new understanding of the Jewish outlook on life' — and suggested that the entire FAIR board discuss the professor's theories on the Jews," according to the SPLC.

SPLC has documented more than twenty years of Tanton's ties with "Holocaust deniers, a former Klan lawyer and leading white nationalist thinkers, including Jared Taylor (who wrote in 2005, 'When blacks are left entirely to their own devices, Western civilization — any kind of civilization — disappears')." "

Asked if Nearman knew about FAIR being a designated hate group, he replied, "I don't put much stock in the Southern Poverty Law Center. The bar to being designated as a hate group is pretty low for them. I stand by my data."

Nearman adds that Oregon needs guest workers. "I'm a software engineer by trade, so my last job, we had people who were in some status of legal-ness working, but they weren't citizens or anything like that, and that's fine," he says. "We do that as we have needs and as we can vet people."

• Join 350 Eugene Thursday, March 16, for a spring membership potluck and meet-up at First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive Street. Bring food to share at 6 pm. At 7 pm the meet-up will include "campaign updates, work group news, action break outs, music and more," according to organizer Betzi Hitz, as well as recruit people to help plan the April 29 "March for a Climate of Safety" in Eugene. Go to world.350.org/eugene for more info.

• City Club of Eugene will host a forum on **Can Oregon Adapt to Climate Change?** noon, Friday, March 17, at the UO Academic Extension at the Baker Center, 975 High Street. Speakers are Kathy Dello, associate director, Oregon Climate Change Research Institute; Steve Adams, director of urban resilience, Institute for Sustainable Communities; and Matt McRae, climate policy strategist for Our Children's Trust.

• The 232-mile Pacific Connector liquefied natural gas pipeline that many thought was canceled after the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission rejected it last March is back in play. Concerned citizen (and sometime EW outdoor columnist) John Williams says he plans to attend community meetings the project is holding this month. "I'd love to know how they are going to keep it from blowing up if a stand-replacing fire burns across an above-ground section of it. Also, how are they going to mitigate the thousands of acres of old growth they will be cutting?" he asks. Open houses are 4 pm to 8 pm Tuesday, March 21, The Mill Casino, 3201 Tremont Street, North Bend; Wednesday, March 22, Seven Feathers Casino, 146 Chief Miwaleta Lane, Canyonville; Friday, March 24, Oregon Institute of Technology, 3201 Campus Drive, Mount Mazama Room, Klamath Falls.

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— OREGON STATE REP. MIKE NEARMAN

The ordinance, which goes into effect 30 days after the vote, includes a provision that forbids the city from tracking people's political, social, religious activities. Neubeck says this is a preventative measure in case the federal government attempts to create a registry.

Nearman says states should be "responsible for everything they can possibly be responsible for." The framers of the Constitution "envisioned a federal government that had limited powers and everything else was left to the people," he adds.

Contrary to the small-government ideology of the Republican Party, relinquishing the state's sanctuary law would give more power to the federal government. Section two of the proposed bill states: "A law enforcement agency of the state of Oregon or of any political subdivision of the state may use agency moneys, equipment or personnel for the purpose of detecting or apprehending persons whose only violation of law is that they are persons of foreign citizenship present in the United States in violation of federal immigration laws."

Illegal immigration, Nearman says, is a problem. "I think by some estimates it costs the state of Oregon \$1.2 billion a year for illegal aliens," he says. "I'm on the budget committee for my school district, and we spend a lot of money to teach students who don't speak English."

Nearman credits that estimate to "The Fiscal Burden of Illegal Aliens on Oregonians," a report published by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). The report claims Oregonians

Money is also a concern when relocating Syrian immigrants to the U.S., according to Nearman, who suggests the federal government is spending 12 times as much bringing refugees to the United States as it would cost to resettle them "somewhere in the Middle East."

On Feb. 15, Oregon House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson released a statement saying she was "appalled" at the House Republicans' proposed legislation: "At a time when we should be extending a hand of compassion to those fleeing violence or hardship, HB 2921 would instead prevent the state or local communities from choosing to protect their residents."

Nearman and the bill's only other sponsor, Rep. Sal Esquivel, a Republican from Medford, are also pursuing a ballot initiative on the issue. They gathered 1,346 signatures on Oct. 20, surpassing the minimum requirement of 1,000 to get a ballot title. A total of 88,184 signatures would be needed for the petition to be placed on the ballot to be decided on by voters.

Nearman did not bring up the petition during an interview. An additional request for a comment was not answered.

EW reached out to Rep. Sal Esquivel on Feb. 23. An unsigned email from his account responded, "Thank you but at this time Rep. Esquivel is not available for an interview with *Eugene Weekly*." A second email asking Esquivel once more for an interview did not receive a response. ■

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